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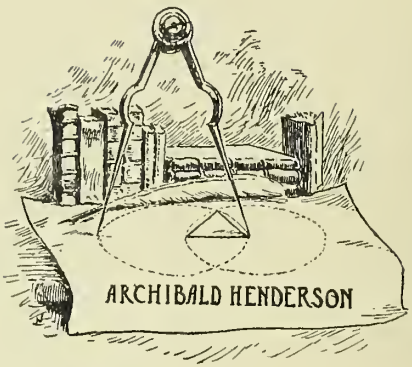

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WILLIAM JAMES

By William James

THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: A STUDY IN HUMAN NATURE. Gifford Lectures delivered at Edinburgh in 1901–1902. 8vo. New York, London, Bombay, and Calcutta: Longmans, Green & Co. 1902.

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WILLIAM JAMES

BY

ÉMILE BOUTROUX

MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT

TRANSLATED FROM THE SECOND EDITION

BY

ARCHIBALD AND BARBARA HENDERSON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

FOURTH AVENUE & 30TH STREET, NEW YORK

LONDON, BOMBAY, AND CALCUTTA

1912

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INTRODUCTION

THE illustrious American philosopher, Professor William James, lost to his country and the world on August 26th, 1910, was so remarkable as a man, aside from his doctrines, that it would be of the greatest interest to study for its own sake his inner life, his soul, his character, his wit, his conversation and his style,—in a word, his personality. May his brother whom he loved so tenderly, and upon whom to his last hour he lavished an admirable devotion — may the great writer, Henry James, with all his tenderness, his power of analysis and his art, paint this cherished portrait! It would materially assist us in comprehending the doctrine of the philosopher. For whereas, in certain men, the personality and the work are so actually separable that in order to understand the one it is necessary, if not to ignore at least to disregard the suggestions afforded by the

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other, with William James it is quite the reverse. He taught that a philosophy has its root in life, not in the collective or impersonal life of humanity, in his view the abstraction of the schools, but in the concrete life of the individual, the only life which really exists. And just as the flower separated from its stalk is not slow to wither, so James thought that philosophy, even in its boldest speculations, should maintain its bond with the soul of the thinker if it is not to degenerate into an empty assemblage of words and of concepts, devoid of all real content.

If, for our part, we can make no pretensions to give new life to the fine image of William James, let us at least try to observe some features of his physiognomy; above all, let us yield ourselves gladly to the vivid impression which his personality of itself produced upon everyone who came in contact with it, so that we may communicate with him sympathetically and by that means in some measure read his inward soul.

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WILLIAM JAMES

LIFE AND PERSONALITY OF WILLIAM JAMES

WILLIAM JAMES was born in New York City, January 11th, 1842. He was the eldest son of the Rev. Henry James of Boston, famous both as theologian and as writer. In outward appearance he bore a striking resemblance to his father. The Rev. Henry James exhibited a curious combination of gaiety and gravity, keen thought and great depth of feeling, with a turn for quip and jest. These traits were found in equal measure in his son William.

The interests of the Rev. Henry James were principally confined to religious questions. In these matters, he was an ardent disciple of the great Swedish savant, Swedenborg.

The point of departure for these famous doctrines which held so much interest for Kant, was the conviction — a con-

viction which Swedenborg had reached from a study of the animal kingdom — of the existence of a constant mutual influence between the mental and the material, between the spiritual and the natural. From that point, Swedenborg, by the study of religion as described in the Scriptures, had risen to the idea of a relation between terrestrial beings and the beings of the spiritual world, with the resultant possibility of knowing directly religious truths, and from this knowledge deriving a purified Christianity as a foundation for the New Jerusalem.

During his early years William James was deeply impressed by his father's teachings. Not only did he acquire a remarkable aptitude for analysis, but he saturated himself so thoroughly with the Swedenborgian spirit that he seems to have preserved throughout his life a secret predilection for the doctrines of the great mystic.

William James's course of studies was not a very methodical one. His father

having gone to live for a time in Europe, William James early familiarized himself with European languages and culture. He received instruction from special tutors in London and Paris. In 1857–8, he attended the *collège* of Boulogne-sur-Mer; and in 1859–60 he studied in the University of Geneva. Then during the winter of 1860–61 he studied painting, under the direction of William M. Hunt, at Newport, Rhode Island.

But the taste for science was uppermost in his nature. In 1861, at the age of nineteen, he entered the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. For two years he studied chemistry and anatomy there. Then in 1863 he entered the Harvard Medical School. Although he purposed taking the doctorate in medicine, he did not confine himself to pursuit of the ordinary course of study. In April, 1865, with Louis Agassiz, he took part in the Thayer Expedition to Brazil, and remained there more than a year. During the winter of 1867–8 he studied physiology at the University of Berlin,

then worked with Agassiz at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoölogy. In 1869, he took his doctorate in medicine at Harvard. Until 1872 he continued to work according to his fancy, assuming no professional obligations, partly because of his ill-health, partly because of his intellectual curiosity, his eagerness for varied knowledge, to say nothing of a certain instinctive repugnance to official duties.

In 1872, at Harvard, began William James's academic career, which was to run its whole course at the same university. He started as an instructor in physiology. Then, from 1873 to 1876, he was an instructor in anatomy and physiology. Beginning in 1875, he offered to graduate students a course dealing with the relations between physiology and psychology. He directed the experimental researches in a room in the Lawrence Scientific School: this was, we may say, the first psychological laboratory established in America. In 1879–80, he gave his first real course in philosophy, which was

entitled: *The Philosophy of Evolution.* At that time he had given up the teaching of anatomy and physiology.

In 1880 he became assistant professor of philosophy. Several years later, in 1884 to be exact, he took part in the establishment of the American Society for Psychical Research. In 1885, he was made professor of philosophy, and in 1889 he took the chair of psychology.

During this period he wrote his great work, *Principles of Psychology* (1890), in two large volumes, the importance of which was at once recognized throughout the entire world. This sufficed to assure him a foremost place in the history of the philosophic movement of our time. In 1892 he published an abridgment of this work, *Psychology, Briefer Course,* or *A Text-Book of Psychology,* which still further added to his renown and influence, and was soon widely adopted as a manual of psychology in the American colleges and universities.

In 1892 he abandoned the direction of the psychological laboratory, and in 1897

exchanged his title of professor of psychology for that of professor of philosophy, which he was to retain to the end of his life. His famous article, *The Will to Believe*, appeared in 1896. And his collected lectures entitled *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on some of Life's Ideals*, which immediately won extraordinary success, and even to-day is eagerly read throughout the world, dates from 1899.

It was in this very year, 1899, that his health, always delicate, underwent a change for the worse. An excess of fatigue, doubtless caused by an excursion in the Adirondacks, brought on a weakness of the heart which kept him away from his university during the years 1899–1901.

Nevertheless, the period extending from this time until his death was probably the most productive and most brilliant of his entire career. In 1901 and 1902, as lecturer on the Gifford Foundation, he gave at the University of Edinburgh his famous course of lectures upon *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which,

when published in 1902, was the signal for a noteworthy movement of ideas in the domain of religious psychology, and for the second time exhibited William James as a pioneer.

In 1906 and in 1907, at the Lowell Institute in Boston, and at Columbia University, New York, he gave some lectures on "Pragmatism" which, published in 1907, likewise created a very great sensation.

Finally, at the general request of professors and pupils, he devoted himself to the task of assembling his ideas and presenting them in their logical co-ordination, in a manual or *Text-Book* similar to the one he had written to embody his psychology. He had written only one part of this work when he set out for Europe, for the purpose of consulting specialists as to the state of his health, which had grown worse.

In spite of the fact that during this trying and painful voyage the gravity of his illness became more and more apparent, William James continued to lavish

upon his friends, just as if he were in his normal condition, the treasures of his mind and heart.

Immediately upon his return to America, to the country village of Chocorua in New Hampshire, he had an attack of heart failure; and after lingering about a week he died on August 26, 1910, at the age of 68.[1]

* * *

The life of Professor James was entirely devoted to studying, experimenting, observing, reading, reflecting, investigating, instructing, talking and writing. He knew

[1] The principal works of William James are: articles published in the *Critique Philosophique* of Renouvier, Paris, 1870, 1880, 1881; *Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols., 1890; *Psychology, Briefer Course* (*A Text-Book of Psychology*), 1892, a work translated into French by E. Baudin and G. Bertier under the title: *Précis de Psychologie*, 1909; *The Will to Believe and other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, 1897, some of which essays appeared in French translation in the *Critique Philosophique; Human Immortality, Two supposed Objections, to the Doctrine*, 1897; *Talks to Teachers on Psychology, and to Students on Life's Ideals*, 1899, the first part of which has been translated into French by L. S. Pidoux,

a great deal, thanks to his lively intellectual curiosity, his powerful and precise memory, his knowledge of languages, his love of books, and his innumerable associations in every country. But he appreciated only the judgments immediately drawn from observation of realities and constantly controlled by this same observation. He regarded as negligible any formula which could not be translated into a fact of experience. One word was constantly upon his lips, expressing that

with the title, *Causeries pédagogiques*, Lausanne and Paris, 1909; *The Varieties of Religious Experience, A Study in Human Nature, being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion delivered at Edinburgh, in 1901–1902*, 1902, a work translated into French by Frank Abauzit, with the title: *L'Expérience religieuse*, 1906; *Pragmatism, a New Name for some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1907; *A Pluralistic Universe, Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the Present Situation in Philosophy*, 1909; a French translation of this work, by Le Brun and Paris, appeared in 1910, entitled, why we cannot imagine: *Philosophie de l'Expérience; The Meaning of Truth, a Sequel to "Pragmatism,"* 1909; in addition, a great number of magazine articles, notably in *Mind, The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods, The Philosophical Review, The Princeton Review, The Harvard Graduates' Magazine, Scribner's Magazine, The Forum, The Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Science, The Nation*, etc.

mode of thought which he especially prized: the word *direct*. He rather enjoyed hurling facts, brutal experience, life, common sense, those ordinary, common and familiar things so dear to Pascal, into the midst of the scholarly systems, the lofty phrases, the sacrosanct traditions of the scholastic, ancient and modern.

Among those students who flocked to his lectures, many came chiefly to obtain ready-made answers in view of their examinations; but he took no pains to satisfy them. With all the fine freshness of his vivacity and verve, he gave his audience the result of his researches and of his personal reflections upon the problems which absorbed him, without so much as recalling the existence of an academic programme. To illustrate, one of his hearers one day interrupted him with these words: "To be serious, for a moment."

This very clever and eloquent professor "professed" as little as possible. He was incapable of binding himself by

the rules of official pedagogy. He threw into his speech his ceaselessly active thought, his ardent soul, his whole being. Whether he taught in his own class room or lectured outside, whether he conversed familiarly with his friends, the spontaneity of his discourse was always arresting. Everything he said was full of pith and suggestion, and he never expressed himself in a conventional, abstract and impersonal way. His ideas left his brain thoroughly alive and impregnated with his personality; the most unexpected, ingenious, and amusing expressions fell naturally from his lips and fixed themselves in the minds of his hearers, who were at once surprised, charmed, and inspired to think for themselves. There was never a more perfect illustration of the too frequently quoted saying of Pascal: "We are delighted when we expect to see an author and find a man."

He wrote just as he talked. Was there, in his case, any great difference between the two occupations? In reading his works, we seem to hear him speak.

In the arrangement of his ideas, there is that same subtle order, free and lively—Pascal's "the order of the heart"—more profound and possibly truer than the gross and palpable order of geometric demonstration. There is the same picturesque, personal language, full of ingenuities and suggestive images. There is the same vivacity, the same vigour of attack and of argument. There is also a superior elegance, marvellous mixture of knowledge, precision, nicety, force, naturalness, grace, and a sort of abandon. Consequently, this profound and trustworthy thinker is, without exerting himself to that end, an author, an artist, one of the glories of American literature as well as of its philosophy. And among other merits, his works possess this rare attribute: they are read.

The life bodied forth so directly by this learning and these works is, in its extreme simplicity, one of incomparable moral richness.

While certain thinkers devote themselves to transforming immediate realities,

along with the passions, the conflicts and the gropings which they involve, into pure ideas, abstract, rigid and impassable, and to observing in some fashion changing things in the guise of changeless eternity, for William James ideas, as such, possess meaning and value in direct proportion to the measure of life that they retain; and every activity of his mind is a cordial participation in the emotions, the labours, and the present tasks of his country and of humanity. He does not merely give expression, as an exceptionally well informed man and subtle critic, to his views upon the conditions of his great philosophic problems, such as the methods and the significance of science, the relations between science and religion, education, the value of suffering, conflict and war, the ideal form of human life. In his own mind he sees himself actually facing alternatives evoked by these questions, and he deals with and resolves these questions with all the force of his being, as everyone does when he feels that a question concerns himself,

and not merely other people. Hence the personal and sympathetic note of his words. He moved the souls of his questioners, because he spoke from his own soul.

Moreover he brought to the study of the problems of life exceptional virility and loftiness of view. He had a proud and courageous soul; and this pride was founded upon a simple trust in the injunctions of morality and the generous enthusiasms of religion. He had the instinct for sympathy and love, for sacrifice, for the asceticism which disciplines the will, for the heroism consecrated to the ideal. He had little taste for protestations of zeal and devotion, and would doubtless have preferred rude frankness to amiable complacency. He would rather have ventured to recall Alceste than Philinte. But if he gave freely of himself only to the truly "scious,"[1] he showed an infinitely affectionate, attentive and delicate kindness toward those whom he counted his friends. In that

[1] See p. 61.

charming residence in Irving Street, which he himself had planned, a large and simple wooden house in the colonial style, surrounded by lawn and trees, like the greater number of the dwelling places in Cambridge, the prevailing atmosphere of the James family was one of very cordial hospitality, as well as of intelligence, wit, frankness, intimacy, outspokenness, work, zest, and earnest.

Such were the conditions in his own family last spring (1910) when Professor James, who in his capacity of physician had followed the course of his malady, decided as a last resort on visiting Paris to consult a distinguished specialist. Neither then nor later, during the period when his sufferings were redoubled and the future grew darker from day to day, did his original humour, his spiritual vivacity, his interest in the present, his inexhaustible courtesy, ever fail him. He doubtless believed that the mind was stronger than the agents which destroy the organism. And he believed that, to men of good will, death itself could not be

otherwise than good. The most excruciating suffering, the impatient call of death, wrung from him no complaint, no word or sign of discouragement. To the end he was the man of thought, of faith and of energy, not admitting that our brief wisdom sets any bounds to possibility, and believing that it depends upon us to contribute, by our personal effort, here below and perhaps hereafter, to the conservation and development of the moral and spiritual forces of the universe.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES

I

PSYCHOLOGY

THE point of departure for the philosophic researches of William James is found in his studies in anatomy and physiology. By profession as well as by doctrine, he prosecuted these studies according to a strictly experimental method. It was precisely this disposition to take experience as his only guide which induced him to overleap the boundaries of physiology and to enter the domain of psychologic research, in which he was destined to distinguish himself.

As a physiologist studying the actions of living beings, he readily admits that a great number of these actions may be satisfactorily explained by considering

them as automatic and mechanical nervous reactions, responding immediately to external excitations. These actions, in fact, are sensibly identical for like excitations. But, on the other hand, certain actions are met with in living beings which differ profoundly from those mentioned above. These, like the former, tend in a general way to the preservation of individuality, but under the same excitation, they are distinct and not to be foreseen. A frog deprived of its higher centres reacts like a machine. But a frog which retains these centres reacts in a spontaneous way.

Shall we admit that this spontaneity is only apparent, and that in reality the reflex is no less mechanical in the second case than in the first? Such an interpretation can be regarded only as arbitrary.

Truth to tell, we do not accurately know whether the slightest reflex, with its property of aiming at the preservation of life, is not actually, at bottom, reducible to pure mechanism. And when

the explanation which satisfies the physiologist coincides exactly with reality, why should not all the reflexes, without exception, be referred back to these elementary reflexes?

But, although I can identify the higher reflexes with the lower only by questionable arguments and by means of unjustifiable metaphysical hypotheses, I find, in experience itself a fact which at once furnishes me with the desired explanation: it is the idea, the phenomenon which, notably in the human being, is interpolated between the excitation and the reaction. If I want to remain on experimental ground, I must make place in the theory of reflexes for the idea, as well as for the nerves which suffice to explain these lower reflexes sensibly. I must explain, scientifically, the actions of animals, as the case demands, now by simple organic movements, now by the intervention of an idea.

Can this observation fail to open a new chapter of physiological science? It is advisable to model science upon

realities, and not to model realities upon this or that condition of our science posited *a priori*. The idea which in animals and in particular in man is strikingly characterized by the fact that it is perceived by a consciousness, could not be known at all if we were dependent solely upon the physiologist's mode of cognition. The experience by which we grasp it differs, not superficially but radically, from sense experience, which suffices for the study of life pure and simple. It is, properly speaking, psychological experience, a mode of cognition the distinct reality of which has been admirably elucidated by Locke, Berkeley, John Stuart Mill, and the modern psychologists.

And yet, in order to define this experience more scientifically, would it not be well, after acknowledging its existence, to form a conception of it as far as possible by analogy with physical experience, and to suppose that its purpose, after disclosing certain simple elements in the soul, is to examine how these latter, by

combination, produce complex phenomena which we are aware of? Such a psychological atomism was the postulate of the so-called associationist doctrine, which for a long time seemed in the ascendant. But in recent years, notably in Scotland and in France, grave objections have been raised against the analogy that this doctrine establishes between psychic relations and mechanical relations. Associationism is an effort to find, in the domain of consciousness, a type of relation which resembles Newtonian attraction. But are we not in danger of letting the essential feature of the psychic fact escape us if we impose on it, *a priori*, the form of the elementary facts of the material world?

One of the most vigorous and successful adversaries of associationism was William James. He never tired of showing that the atomistic hypothesis, which posits impenetrable elements literally exterior to each other and fundamentally immutable, in no way conforms to the nature, essentially shaded, complex, pene-

trable, fluid and individual, of the existences made known to us by psychological experience. That is to say, under the name of states of consciousness, associationism considers imaginary entities, artificially detached from psychic reality, elaborated according to a type which relates to another order of phenomena, and does not consider the life of the soul itself on the side of its truly specific and original quality.

Supposing, then, that associationism must be abandoned, does it follow, on the other hand, that we must return to the substance of the spiritualist school, as the principle of the unity which, basically, enters into psychic multiplicity?

This solution, too, is insufficient. Like the associationists' atom of consciousness, the substance of the spiritualist school is nothing more than a creature of the reason, unknown to experience. And the homogeneous universality which characterizes it, renders it unfit to explain whatever actually

is fluid and capable of novelty in psychic experience.

The conclusion to be reached is that introspection is and remains the fit and necessary method for psychology. But in order for this process to be really productive, it must be carried out in some specific way which, so far, has not been accurately or completely defined. It must be directed in such a way as to grasp something more than the multiple without unity, the object of the physico-psychological experience of the associationists, or the one without the multiple, the object of the alleged intuition of the spiritualistic metaphysicians. The true introspection is the living synthesis, the intimate fusion, the concrete unity of these two methods. It has for its object the actual, the immediate datum of consciousness. But this datum is neither a state of consciousness in juxtaposition to other states, like things situated in space, nor an ego one and identical, comparable to a mathematical unity; it consists in the total content, at once

distinct and indistinct, finite and infinite, one and multiple, of a certain individual consciousness, taken at a given moment of its existence. And the very idea of an isolated moment is itself a fiction: for consciousness is a current in perpetual motion. *The stream of consciousness:* that is the least inappropriate mode of designating it.

Such, in fine, is psychological experience; it comes to coincide with consciousness itself. It is not a pincushion to stick events into, nor is it a numerical collection of elements, in regard to which unity and individuality would be only epiphenomena; it is a multiple unity and a single multiplicity, an entity essentially individual and alive. And to consider its manifestations irrespective of its life and its individuality is to consider something other than the thing in question. This unity is not made from multiplicity, for we cannot obtain it by means of synthesis. The multiple may result from it, but can neither precede nor produce it. Such is, in some sort, the case of

thought in relation to words: we can translate thought into words; we cannot, with words, make a thought.

Psychological experience, thus determined, being as real as physical experience, the psychology which shall be built up by this means will be entitled to the name of natural science, the same title as that given to the sciences of life which deal with physical experience.

What use, however, will psychology make of the method suited to its ends? Will it confine itself to describing the phenomena discerned by introspection, without attempting in any way to explain them?

To stop at the mere description of phenomena is not to do scientific work; and to restore the entities of the spiritualistic metaphysicians would be much better than to cut oneself off from all investigation of the laws and causes of phenomena. But just as it is impossible to consider physical experience as the only experience which science can vouch for, it

would be no less artificial to isolate psychic experience from physical experience. The concrete and real experience which our datum as such represents shows us states of consciousness conditioned, and that directly, by certain activities of the cerebral hemispheres. This testimony cannot be invalidated by the data peculiar to consciousness. Up to a certain point, then, psychology might apply itself to the task of giving a true explanation of the phenomena starting from the supposition of a constant correlation between cerebral states and psychic states. Whenever this expedient proves convenient, nothing will prevent it from calling to its aid associationism, which has been constructed in just such a way as to establish a symmetrical relation between the psychic and the physical.

But it is important to observe that if, in James's case, psychology at many points resumes a method which at first it seemed to proscribe, it does so by modifying its meaning in conformity

with its own principles. In the psychology of concrete and total consciousness, psycho-physical parallelism is no longer a principle but an hypothesis, an artifice; it is a partial and fictitious representation of the nature of things, in a word, a language the value of which we shall test in trying to make use of it as a method of explanation. The human mind can neither think nor even perceive, save by means of presumptions and hypotheses: its affirmations signify that the instruments it has forged, the bodies it has constructed, have served it many times before in its dealings with reality.

Furthermore, in a vital and direct psychology like that of James, the postulate of parallelism takes on a new significance. For experience shows us not only the action of the physical upon the moral, but also, no less clearly, the action of the moral upon the physical. Thus it may very well happen that the cerebral state, on which a psychic state depends, is not itself purely physical in its origin. Our separation of the mechanical from

the conscious does not exist in nature. Consider, on the one hand, a certain psychic reflex, obviously spontaneous; and, on the other hand, an elementary reflex which seems to be a purely mechanical phenomenon. Nature offers us imperceptible transitions from one to the other. And in substance, the most reasonable hypothesis is that originally all the nervous centres without exception responded to excitations in a spontaneous and intelligent way, but that, as the result of a certain evolution, the nervous centres showed differentiation, some exhibiting higher, some lower development than is to be found in the primitive being.

Once, then, in possession of the principle, the point of view and the method adapted to the purpose, psychology may unhesitatingly call upon the assumptions and the postulates of the biological and physical sciences, since in the world of reality there no longer remain any sharp distinctions between things, and the psychical, in fact, merges into the physical.

The principles of the physical sciences will undergo complete transformation through contact with psychology. Their materialism will fade away, their mechanism will quicken, their determinism will grow pliant.

* * *

Having thus defined the conditions for the transition from physiology to psychology, William James for a long time devoted all his attention to the latter science. He dealt with it for its own sake, adopting the method and the point of view which exactly suited him. In every investigation he forced himself not to consider things merely from the outside or from a biased standpoint, not to confine himself to interpretation by means of concepts formed to grasp and classify other objects, but to take his stand at the centre of the realities that he wished to understand, to look phenomena full in the face, and to study them as directly and at as close quarters

as he possibly could. The work that he has accomplished in this domain is so considerable and original, so constantly in contact with living reality, that it will very certainly last through the ages, as one of the decisive events in the historical development of science. It is the restoration, after the reign of associationism, of introspective psychology upon new foundations.

According to James, the subject of psychology is the life of personal consciousness. This life has two characteristics: in the first place, it is a teleological activity, a choice of means in view of the realization of an end; furthermore and in the second place, its aim is, properly speaking, the preservation of those parts of its content in which it takes an interest, and the elimination of all others.

Such is the dual fundamental fact. To place this fact in its physical environment, that is to say, first of all, in the brain, to describe all its phases and all its forms, and to connect them with their physiological conditions: this is the immense

task undertaken in the *Principles of Psychology* (1890), for a good part of its extent, and in the *Briefer Course* (1892). These are rigorously scientific works, in form as well as in substance, in a very real way envisaging psychology as a natural science, and at the same time very easy-going in traversing the precise and subtle subjects involved, very lively, very elegant, very captivating, agreeable and invigorating reading for a man of the world, no less than an indispensable working instrument for the specialist. Read, in the *Briefer Course*, the chapter on Habit, or the end of the chapter on Will, and you will have to confess with delighted surprise that, just as the philosopher always considers his material in the totality of its content, so the man, even in the most technical treatise, unfailingly puts all of himself into his task, — his imagination, and his heart, as well as his intelligence and his knowledge.

Among the numerous original features of the works of William James, one of the most celebrated is the theory of emo-

tion, considered as the effect, and not the cause, of its organic expression.[1] According to the actual order of things, James points out, we must not say that we weep because we feel sad, but we must say that we are sad because we weep. Emotion does not result from efferent nerve currents, but solely from afferent currents. It is nothing but the feeling induced in us by reactions, motor, visceral, and circulatory, consequent upon the perception of the object. The induced state of consciousness does not immediately follow the representative state of consciousness; certain corporeal modifications intervene, and it is the feeling of these modifications which constitutes emotion. The principal proof given by James is that we cannot imagine

[1] This theory is known as the James-Lange theory. In reality James began to publish his views on this question in *Mind*, in 1884; the Danish physiologist Lange, unaware of James's work, set forth the same doctrine, in 1885, in a book entitled: *Ueber die Gemütsbewegungen.*—In the *Annales de la Société linnéenne de Lyon*, t. LVIII, 1911, M. Nayrac shows that about 1830 two French doctors, Ph. Dufour and P. Blaud, had outlined a similar theory.

what would remain of emotion if we eliminated the totality of concomitant organic reactions.

It is clear that James constructs and defends his theory without for a moment inquiring whether it proves or invalidates the truth of materialism. He seeks an explanation which agrees with experience, and he seeks nothing else. It is the province of modern science, by means of proximate causes, to discover explanations which are both instructive and useful without having to touch upon questions which involve general principles.

It by no means follows, however, that William James, as a philosopher, is indifferent to the metaphysical question evoked by his theory. On the contrary, in his subsequent reflections upon the explanation of emotion by afferent currents, he raises the question whether this view can properly be taxed with materialism. In the first place, it is not every species of emotion, but crude and violent emotions, which are here considered. Possibly certain delicate emo-

tions, such as the esthetic and moral emotions, are caused in some other way. The value of an emotion, then, resides in its own nature, and not in its mode of production. If some emotion is, in itself, a profound fact, pure, noble and spiritual, it remains so whether or not it consists in the feeling of certain visceral modifications. To explain the appearance of a phenomenon is not to suppress it.

But that is not all. The physiological theory of emotion springs from certain somatic phenomena, and does not need to inquire whether these phenomena, in their turn, have a purely bodily cause. It is enough to affirm that, where they are present, emotion appears. But all psychological phenomena cannot be explained in this way without raising the question of the origin, mechanical or extra-mechanical, of their somatic conditions. The phenomenon of attention, for example, if one fathoms it, leads the psychologist to consider it possible for psychical action, as such, to add something new to the forces actually present

in the individual. It may indeed happen, in certain cases, that consciousness itself contributes to produce and determine the psychological substratum which conditions its operation.

* * *

Psychology overlaps physiology. The subject-matter of the latter which, to the physiologist, seems a complete and absolute whole, is nothing more than a part, and not an isolable part, in the eyes of the psychologist, who sees it take form, by a contingent differentiation and fixation, from a vaster and more mobile reality furnished by consciousness. Does that mean that psychology attains ultimate and absolutely true reality, where things reveal themselves exactly as they are?

If physiology has its postulates, which rest upon psychological foundations, psychology in its turn cannot boast that it admits only that which it proves and comprehends by means of its own data. In

a word, psychology is in a situation analogous to that of the other sciences. It is created by the aid of elements of which it has from the outset adequate knowledge, being given the tasks which these elements impose upon it. In this sense, its postulates have all the necessary clearness and certainty. Thus an astronomer may advance up to a certain point in the explanation of the celestial phenomena by admitting that the sun revolves around the earth. But, in proportion as the field of his researches is enlarged, it becomes clear that such an accepted axiom was after all only a postulate, and that even the meaning of this postulate must be modified, if we wish it to apply to a profounder and vaster reality.

In the last analysis, the data of psychology are these two: first, the effective existence of thoughts and of feelings, according to the terms we employ to designate our transitory states of consciousness; second, the knowledge, by means of these states of consciousness, of

certain realities other than these states themselves.

There can be no doubt that the psychologist may cultivate a considerable portion of his field without questioning these postulates, merely contenting himself with the possession of a reasonably clear if not a distinct definition; but on the other hand the investigator, determined to follow reality wherever it may lead, may one day find himself facing such questions as these: the relation of consciousness to the brain, the relation of mental states to their objects, the mobile character of consciousness, the relation of states of consciousness to an understanding subject. Not only can he not resolve these problems by the aid of the only resources which physiological and psychological data, so defined, furnish him, but the very solutions which he has obtained with reference to the more directly accessible matters now appear to him only abstract and relative.

Thus we see that the condition of

psychology is analogous to that of physiology. If the latter carries its researches far enough, it sees rising before it some day enigmas which are beyond its powers of solution. In like manner, psychology undoubtedly offers a wide field as a purely natural science. But in the course of its progress an hour strikes when, if it wishes to explain facts in respect to their most distinctive quality, it finds itself compelled to enlarge its boundaries and to touch upon higher questions — the questions called metaphysical. It requires courage to say it: the Galileo or the Lavoisier of psychology, the man who shall unveil the truly fundamental principle, if he is ever to appear, will be a metaphysician.

Can experience, the sole source of our knowledge, suffice to meet the crisis of such an evolution?

II

RELIGIOUS PSYCHOLOGY

THE scholar who has dealt with no form of experience but the physical, readily imagines that this is the only possible form. But the psychologist who, not burdening himself *a priori* with researches upon the conditions of knowledge, settles by fact, as did Diogenes, the problem of possibility, and from the outset deals with psychological experience, perceives, when he comes to reflect later upon this experience, that by very reason of its distinctive and original quality it is no less real than physical experience, is naturally allied to it, and moreover is not reducible to it. There are then two sorts of experience: why might there not be three? Does the second, added to the first, exhaust the content of reality?

Amid the infinite variety of phases

which human consciousness can offer, there is one which appears peculiarly paradoxical: the one called alteration of personality. How can consciousness, the distinctive traits of which are unity and continuity, undergo transformation or subdivision into several more or less heterogeneous egos, simultaneous, successive, or alternative? Phrase it as we may, to profess to confine ourselves to the clear and convenient doctrine of a personal consciousness always identical with itself, circumscribed and closed, would be to condemn ourselves to consider the alterations of personality as purely illusory appearances. The evidence of definitions pales before the evidence of facts on this point; and psychology has resigned itself to the admission that beyond the ego acutely conscious of itself, lies a more or less considerable mass of psychic elements susceptible of gravitating around the ego, or perhaps of organizing themselves on their own account into consciousnesses more or less distinct from the primary consciousness.

Now, so long as we are dealing with certain pathological phenomena, in which the personality primarily appears to be weakened or mutilated, the hypothesis of a simple disintegration of consciousness may seem to suffice; and those psychologists wedded to the principle of the clear consciousness do not despair of deriving, from the latter, the total content of the obscure and marginal consciousness. Truth to tell, we may question whether those who profess to support this claim are not sometimes deceived as to the value of their explanations, just as in the case of the physiologist who hopes to reduce the inferior reflexes entirely to mechanism. But it becomes wholly impossible, apparently, to be satisfied with an explanation drawn from normal psychology, an analysis of personal consciousness, when we are dealing with certain alterations of personality, in which the latter exhibits itself, not merely modified, but immeasurably magnified and transfigured, as in the evolution of religious souls. And if we

wish to test the explanation of these phenomena by the only principles with which normal psychology deals, we are compelled either to deny the facts, or else to mutilate or distort them.

Now, just as the psychologist, suffocating in the prison in which physiology confined him, has opened up an immense field of study by deliberately positing the existence of a specifically psychological experience, so it may be that, in taking up his position at the centre of the religious life, in place of looking at it from without like the anatomist dissecting a corpse, he may recognize the distinct existence of a third sort of experience, the truly religious experience.

It is important to consider that such a psychic phenomenon, which we are unable to construct with the discrete multitude of elements that condition it, may readily be explained if we admit the reality of that special form of existence we call consciousness — like the case of the simple physical phenomenon of motion, which we are forced to deny if we

admit only arithmetic discontinuity, but which becomes at once possible and real if we posit as valid the experimental intuition of the continuum. Given these examples, it would be anti-philosophic, in the face of certain phenomena that the principles of our established sciences do not suffice to explain, to refuse to seek new paths, and to hazard new hypotheses.

The alterations of personality that the religious life offers us were in their turn studied directly by William James from the point of view of the religious soul itself. This study is found in his celebrated work: *The Varieties of Religious Experience, A Study in Human Nature*, published in 1902.

Pathology, which often throws light on the study of the normal being by isolating and exaggerating some of its functions, has thrown into still clearer view a strange faculty of human consciousness: the faculty, peculiar to certain subjects, of entering into communication with other consciousnesses, which

more or less mingle with, and sometimes even replace, the original consciousness. In these phenomena, the consciousness no longer perceives exterior objects, as it does in physical experience; it is no longer enclosed within the limits of a given ego, as happens in psychological experience pure and simple: it enters into other egos and yields itself to their influence.

This faculty, which apparently illness does not cause but merely develops and determines so as to make it evident, is, according to James, the psychic basis of the religious life. Not that religion is in itself morbid. Shall we say that attention is a morbid phenomenon because certain nervous maladies over-excite it, and bring into prominence certain of its properties? The earth is not the plant. Its products depend upon the seeds which it receives. But it is clear that, if religion is to become a phase of human life, man must be capable of it. According to James, the property of the human soul which fits it for receiving

religious impression is that very one which is brought into prominence, through its exaggeration, by the pathological facts of alteration of personality, that is, the possible abolition of the impenetrability which, in the ordinary life, characterizes the consciousness of the individual.

Religion, viewed no longer merely in its psychological aspect but in its individual reality, is essentially a certain life-form of the individual consciousness in which the ego feels itself modified to its very depths. It is an experience in the sense of the verb "to experience," which means not to verify in a dry way a thing which takes place outside of us, but to try, feel, live in one's own person this or that mode of existence: a sense of the word exactly corresponding to that of the German *erleben*. It is an experience which varies essentially with the individual, and in which the individual element cannot be suppressed without causing the religious character to disappear at the same time. If the synthetic action of an ego, present as a

whole in each one of its manifestations, characterizes the psychological consciousness, the radical modification of a given personality is the essence of the religious phenomenon. In consequence, there does not exist a religious experience as such, capable of appearing identical in the case of all men, as with scientific experience. That which alone effectively counts for a philosophy starting from realities and not from abstract concepts, is the individual varieties of religious experience, that is to say, of the religious life.

Among the themes suited to this experience may be noted: the essential and unquenchable joy of the soul; the cure of moral and physical maladies effected by abandoning oneself to the all-powerful divine goodness; the feeling of sin and of moral suffering, as determined by certain causes of which in spite of all our efforts we have learned nothing; the soul divided against itself, feeling within it the struggle of conflicting personalities which it cannot reconcile; conversion which, either sudden or gradual,

substitutes for a given personality a totally different and incomparably superior personality; sanctity which brings out in man a superhuman and enduring perfection; the mystic spiritual life in which man, while remaining himself, is conscious of living the same life as God; prayer which through superhuman means modifies the current of our feelings and of events.

Among these varied phenomena, the individual is aware of entering into relation with certain powers, as conscious and personal as itself, but immeasurably superior in nature. He testifies that, while he experiences religious emotion, his life is transformed, magnified, ennobled, animated with an enthusiasm, a capacity for heroism, and a confidence in success, — feelings of which he was, of himself, incapable. And he is naturally led to consider as a true consciousness and personality akin to his own, that being who thus understands him, realizes him, succors him, heals him, and creates within him a new personality.

Such is the religious consciousness; it is the human consciousness endowed with the conviction that it is communicating with God.

At the same time it communicates with other consciousnesses. Incapable among themselves of comprehending, of understanding, of truly communing with each other, so long as they believe only in themselves, men once turned to God may, in Him, love and commune with one another. To those whom the divine grace has not touched, the universe offers only strangers, outside the inner circle of friendship. To the religious soul, every creature is a friend who, as God does, enters within that inner circle. For religion brings us in touch with the depths of souls, makes us familiar with them; and, at bottom, all human beings desire God, goodness and love.

If, then, psychological experience already has a range of perception far vaster than that of physical experience, religious experience in its turn transcends psychological experience. The former

merely embraces the total content of a finite ego, of a personality thrown back upon itself; religious experience sees this personality develop and grow in grace, thanks to the relation of identification and communion existing between it and higher personalities.

Irreducible to psychological experience, is religious experience properly separable from it? Is one superposed upon the other from without, like one storey upon another; or are these two experiences encased, the one within the other, like the tubes of a telescope?

There is, it would seem, some relation between religious experience and psychological experience, like the relation of the latter to physical experience; the two experiences partly overlap. Just as reflex action is, at bottom, a phenomenon at once physiological and psychical, in the same way consciousness, which appears to itself like a closed sphere, in reality possesses a medial region between the individual ego and the other egos.

For a long time scholars have recognized the existence of a margin, around some centre or focus of consciousness — a margin the bounds of which cannot be measured, and in which float elements of lesser and lesser consciousness, susceptible of being projected, under the action of attention, into the full light of the focal consciousness. But to-day our knowledge of the ego does not stop there. One must regard as fundamental the discovery, definitely established in 1886, of a field of consciousness actually lying beyond this margin of the personal consciousness. The learned and profound psychologist Myers has described as "subliminal" this consciousness beyond consciousness, which connects itself up with the central ego through the intermediary of the marginal region. The existence of this subliminal ego is attested by the number of ideas which the central ego encounters in its field of observation, and which it cannot, in any way, connect with its personal experience. Such are the intuitions of genius; such

the metaphysical postulates of our physical or psychological experience; such, for example, the notion of a true reality, answering to our subjective soul-states, the notion of a correspondence between our ideas and things, enabling us to elevate our ideas to the status of knowledge.

But this subliminal ego is well adapted to explain the characteristics of the religious consciousness. In it is effaced, shall we say, reduced little by little to vanishing undulations, the circle originally fixed which the individual draws about itself, and within which it claims to be self-sufficing and isolated from the universe. And in this open and hospitable region, diverse consciousnesses may enter into each other, lower consciousnesses may unite themselves with higher, even to the divine consciousness itself.

Let us consider, then, a certain religious phenomenon, the reality of which all might be tempted to deny, because we judge it not as superior, but as contrary,

to the nature of the human ego — the phenomenon of conversion. For one who admits the existence of the subliminal ego, this phenomenon, without ceasing to be supernatural, becomes compatible with the natural conditions of our psychic existence. Religious conversion is, in this sense, perhaps a sudden irruption, perhaps a slow infiltration, through the central part of the consciousness, of a mass of impressions which are born in the subliminal region and which, through their intensity or through the confident surrender of the ego, succeed in breaking down the barriers within which the latter was confined. Hence a displacement of the soul-focus, a change of orientation of the will and feeling.

There is, moreover, according to this doctrine, a continual transition of truly psychological experience to religious experience, as of physical experience to psychological experience. And psychological experience is embodied in religious experience, as is physical experience in psychological experience.

Having thus come, in following the progress of a definite mode of experience, to the discovery of a deeper experience, we perceive it for the first time in a new light. The physiological becomes, for the psychologist, a part, artificially separated and congealed, of the infinitely complex and mobile current of consciousness. Similarly the psychic, pure and simple, the experience at the heart of an impenetrable consciousness, becomes, for one who places himself in the centre of the religious consciousness, the accidental and superficial manifestation of an ego which, according to its true essence, is capable of entering into the vast and sympathetic communion of personalities. Under the appearance of the fixed laws and of the rigid determination of matter, there is the flux of consciousness; beneath the consciousnesses, distinct from each other, of individuals, there is the mutual interpenetration of consciousnesses, coexisting with their individuality in the sphere of the spiritual and the divine.

III

PRAGMATISM

IT would seem that in committing ourselves to this third kind of experience, to this contact with the deep reality which religion secures us, it ought to be possible for us to grasp the metaphysical problems, whatever they are, involved in the postulates of the physical sciences, and in those of psychology as a natural science. But is it permissible to engage at the outset in such a research?

The philosophy of James is distinguished from the greater number of modern philosophical systems by this very remarkable trait: in contradistinction to the injunction of Kant, it refuses to begin with the criticism of our means of knowledge. It throws itself directly *in medias res*. It aspires to prove the possibility of knowledge by creating it.

In fact, it determines its task in each domain in such a way that it need hardly fear the reproach of temerity. That physiology, in spite of the postulates which it involves, may be treated as a positive science is a fact which no one to-day would care to contest. Similarly, it seems, a psychology which strictly forbids any incursion into the domain of metaphysics, and which, discarding the investigation of causes so-called, aims only at being hypothetically explanatory, can scarcely arouse objections. In religious psychology itself, as his book upon the varieties of individual religious experience (omitting the postscript) presents it, the object of the author is only to analyse and explain phenomena empirically from the point of view of the religious consciousness itself. Who would deny the validity of such researches? To seize, to describe and to co-ordinate experience as such, without pronouncing upon its relation to reality in itself, cannot be an inadmissible temerity.

But again, is it indeed a question of the

acquisition of knowledge pure and simple if, in the light of religious experience, we undertake to discover what is at the bottom of the postulates of psychology and physiology; if, not content with grasping the relations of facts among themselves, we attack the redoubtable problems of the original cause and of the phenomena which the sciences discard as transcendent and insoluble? Is it, moreover, strictly true that religious psychology, normal psychology and physiology claim only to describe and co-ordinate appearances without concerning themselves in the least about objective certainty? Physiology, for its part, purports to be a form of knowledge in all the force of the term, that is to say, really to know and explain. And psychology, not only natural but religious as well, confident also in its postulates, does not seriously admit that its descriptions and explanations have literally only a subjective value. However that may be, to search, as the philosopher early and late is drawn to do, into the meaning and

the value of those postulates themselves, is to commit ourselves, if we wish to proceed methodically and circumspectly, to treat of the relations of our conceptions to existence and to truth: that is to say, of the critical problem itself. At the point which we have reached, it is no longer possible to shirk this problem. The philosophy of experience, like the others, sees at a certain point of its course this stumbling-block, as Kant called it, barring its road.

The view which William James took on this matter he designated by a name which the American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, employed in 1878, in connection with the same class of ideas: the name of Pragmatism. Not that William James considered Pragmatism a modern invention. His work on this doctrine is entitled: *Pragmatism, a New Name for some Old Ways of Thinking.* And in this connection he places under the patronage of Socrates, Aristotle, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and John Stuart Mill the work of his colleagues, Dewey,

F. C. S. Schiller, and their followers. But what he considered only fragmentary in the case of his predecessors has become, or tends to become, as he says, a general orientation of philosophic thought.

The question of the value of experience is a very embarrassing one. In dealing with physical experience, being given a materially practical object, we know quite well what we are aiming at in this domain when we say that the object's value is established by a comparison of our assertions with facts, as with a measure existing outside ourselves. But, on the other hand, if we are dealing with the psychological idea of consciousness, it is quite a different matter. Where is now the duality of idea and fact, of subject and object, which appears involved in the idea of true knowledge? One willingly admits that the identity of subject and object which characterizes consciousness is precisely what gives to its evidence a unique and unassailable value. But it is vain to attribute a

distinctively scientific character to an unverifiable affirmation; and, after all, we do not in the least degree know what are, in essence and effect, the states of which we have consciousness. The term consciousness, which signifies knowledge of self, and which supposes, besides, an understanding subject corresponding to the object understood, expresses in reality only a postulate. *Sciousness* is the term which ought to be used to designate the phenomenon correctly. Sciousness: that is to say a modification of the thinking subject grasped in a purely subjective fashion. But who can prove that such a knowledge has any real value?

Much less, then, does the religious consciousness contain within itself the proof of the reality of its objects. How are we to verify, that is, to compare with an immediate perception of things, the idea which the believer conceives of the cause of his inner transformation, since the cause cannot in any degree be dissociated from the subjective feeling of this transformation? The threefold division of

experience doubtless corresponds to exterior phenomena. But is this anything else than an indication of the more and more complicated problems which confront science, questions which it might deem itself actually incapable of dealing with, but which, however difficult, should not lead us to an abandonment of the mechanistic method of explanation, which would be nothing less than suicidal.

Not only, then, is the question of the value of experience inevitable, but any clear solution seems possible only by the reduction of the second and third forms of experience to the original physical experience.

William James proceeds in this matter as in all others; he goes from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the difficult, these words being understood, moreover, in their common and vulgar acceptation.

What is the necessary and sufficient condition in the physical order, that an idea be received as true? Since science

is fundamentally experimental, an idea scientifically true is no longer an idea considered as the portrait resembling the thing which it represents; it is the conception of a formula which tells us what we ought to expect when we affirm that a certain phenomenon exists. The law of falling bodies signifies that if I release the body which I hold in my hand, I shall see it on the earth at the end of a certain time determinable *a priori*. How does this phenomenon operate intrinsically, of what actions is it the result, what is really its cause? Science answers these questions only up to a certain point and then only apparently. Sooner or later it finds itself in the presence of a law which is not contained in any more general law, and which has no other significance than to indicate a certain constant conjunction of sensible perceptions.

In what, then, exactly, according to science, does the truth of an idea consist? It consists wholly in the faculty of adapting the thought of man to reality.

An idea is a prediction. It says: If you are placed in a certain set of conditions you will see certain phenomena take place. The true idea is the one which predicts truly: which, put to the test, keeps its promise. The true idea is the one which pays, which guarantees a work remunerative, which, applied, gives us the desired hold upon reality. The truth of an idea, then, is not determined by its origin, sensible or rational, nor by its logical relation to this or that principle; it only depends upon its results. *The truth of an idea is constituted by its workings.* True signifies verified or verifiable, nothing less, nothing more.

And since verification is necessarily an action, the action, of some one, verity is not an entity suspended in the void; it is a proof, made or capable of being made by certain individuals; it is a certain satisfaction, susceptible of being experienced by beings such as a human person.

There are, moreover, various objects

about which man may desire this satisfaction. He may wish to adapt himself to things from a physical point of view; the true idea in this case aims at a material modification of things, and tells us what sensible perception must be given in order that a certain other may be produced. Man may desire to represent to himself more easily and conveniently, in a manner better adapted to the tendency of his intelligence, the relations of a certain set of phenomena one to another; this desire is met by scientific theory. We should sum up faithfully enough the necessary and sufficient conditions of a true idea by defining it as follows: an idea which has the property of adapting us, mentally or physically, to some reality. "*What meaning indeed can an idea's truth have, save its power of adapting us either mentally or physically to a reality?*" [1]

If one wishes, in a word, to designate the doctrine of knowledge which, for

[1] *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Dec. 3, 1908, p. 692.

the philosopher, disengages itself from the scrutiny of science, it seems, according to James, that it should be called pragmatism (from πρᾶγμα, action), as opposed to conceptualism, or abstract rationalism. Science, indeed, subordinates ideas to facts, and not facts to ideas. To science, reality is not a function of truth: truth is a function of reality. Facts truly real always come back, in the last analysis, to observable manifestations of some human action.

If such is the criterion of the true idea, can one say that this takes place in psychological and religious experience, as it incontestably takes place in the domain of physical experience?

Early in his career, the attention of William James was directed to this fundamental problem. One of his first philosophic writings was a letter which he addressed in French to the editors of the *Critique Philosophique*, in 1878, under the title: *Some considerations upon the objective method.* He denied the claim

that truth could be judged according to some abstract concept and not by the living and real experience of man himself. He agreed on this point, he stated, with the philosophic principles professed by his good friends Renouvier and Pillon, and he took pleasure in testifying to this agreement in the dedication of his *Principles of Psychology* (1890): "To my dear friend François Pillon, as a token of affection and an acknowledgment of what I owe to the *Critique Philosophique*."

The views propounded by James in 1878 became more and more confirmed in his opinion by reflection. Why, he demanded, should the true idea, as defined by pragmatism, be excluded from psychic experience and from religious experience as such? In fact, the employment of certain psychic or religious means may lead to the desired result quite as well as the employment of purely physical means. One movement may be produced by another movement, but on the other hand an idea or even a movement may, as experience teaches

us, be produced by an idea. We have no need, in order to know whether a certain idea is efficacious, to revert to the physical conditions, doubtless indeterminable in their totality, of the production of this idea; it is sufficient to consider it in itself. Here, where the idea is present, a certain phenomenon appears; there, where it is absent, the phenomenon does not take place. What more do we require in order to recognize the idea as the cause of the phenomenon? The idea of a certain end to be pursued awakens in me activities which, if this idea had not intervened, would have remained dormant. Such a religious belief increases and augments my energy extraordinarily or even cures an illness of my body. Are not these facts precisely analogous to the service rendered by a physical formula to one who wishes to perform a material work?

There is even this difference in favour of the religious idea, that while the scientific idea can be only the proof of a relation pre-existing in nature, religious

belief can itself create the connection which it affirms. Faith is a force: it cures, exalts, engenders, by its own virtue, when all physical means fail. There are cases where the idea verifies itself by that alone which it is.

We should not, then, reserve to physical experience the monopoly of the true idea. If we understand the word Truth in its really scientific sense, we find that the true idea is encountered likewise in psychological experience and even in religious experience.

Certain people, however, interpose objections. It is not legitimate, they contend, to identify the verification of which an idea is susceptible in psychologic and religious matters with that which it receives in a scientific matter. In one case it is the experience of all which affirms the faithfulness of an idea to its promises and its fidelity; in the other it is only an experience more or less particular and individual. Science is *us;* consciousness, religion, is only *me.* How can the same value be attributed to

universal experience and to individual experience? Scientific experience is objective experience, experience in itself. It grows and becomes fixed, thanks to a critical labour which disengages a totality of ideas from individual impressions and exists by itself henceforth as a distinct reality, imposing itself upon the individual consciousness. Religious experience on the contrary is experience purely and irremediably subjective; it is experience, not as substantive, but as verb: *to experience;* it is the individual actually experiencing this or that impression which he himself perhaps will not experience, will not be able to experience to-morrow. One, in a word, is knowledge, the other is only feeling.

Within the pragmatic argument, moreover, they add, a sophistry is hidden. The true idea, according to pragmatism, is an idea which verifies itself. Nothing truer than this definition. But the idea verifies itself because it is true; it is not true because it verifies itself. The verification is the sign, not the cause, of the

verity. Pragmatism confounds the order of things with the order of the operations which we go through in order to know them. Certainly an idea for us only becomes true when we have been able to verify it. But in itself it was, before any examination, intrinsically true or false. The radii of a circle did not wait to be equal until we knew them to be so. The verification has only been able to bring into prominence a quality of the idea which pre-existed in it. And every effort of science tends to discover and disengage the truth, eternally existing, not to form out of the objective elements of experience a truth always equally relative and illusory. Either pragmatism, then, is without value, or it presupposes the very theory of truth which it claims to replace.

Such are the objections which many oppose to pragmatism. They clearly betray certain metaphysical prejudices as well as certain habits of mind contracted passively rather than inevitably under the influence of scientific research.

Truth, it is often supposed, implies a value, not subjective but objective. A true idea is not only true for me, it is true in itself. And in what then can this property consist if not in the relation of the idea to an object fixed and absolute, an object which may reside within the idea or outside it, but which necessarily distinguishes itself from the idea so far as it is mine, and even from the idea so far as it is verified by my experience or by the experience of all men? The true idea, it is concluded, can only remain true through conformity to its object.

The pragmatism of William James makes no difficulty about accepting this formula; but for him it is true of this definition as of the general concept of truth: it represents, not a dogma to subscribe to, but a problem to solve, and to solve empirically.

In what, precisely, does the object, the norm of the true idea, consist? It may be conceived in two ways. According to certain philosophers who voluntarily call themselves intellectualists or rational-

ists, this object would be something eternal, absolutely definite, immutable, intelligible in itself and by itself. In other words, it would be the truth itself, as a thing in itself. Thus the intellectualist doctrine may be summed up in these terms: the true idea is that which conforms to truth. Irreproachable affirmation! But how do we know that there exists such a static and dead truth as that which this maxim supposes if it is not a pure tautology, and what means have we of verifying its existence? The sort of science sought here, in any case, cannot be furnished by experience, and James professes to believe only in experience.

It is proper, then, to inquire whether the object which the true idea necessarily supposes may not be something quite different from the transcendent truth of the intellectualists.

In fact, another conception is possible, namely that of common sense, in the view of which the object to which our ideas must conform is not a truth outside of things, unseizable and problematic,

but the reality itself in so far as it is given by experience. It is with this reality, properly defined, that the pragmatism of James concerns itself; it is in reality pure and simple that he finds the source both of the existence and of the properties of the idea, without excepting its capacity of being true. Knowledge, in the exact sense of the word, is not, for him, anything ready-made and pre-existing of which our experience offers only a copy, more or less rough and unfaithful. Living experience is, itself, the original and direct contact of the mind with reality. Knowledge, correctly so-called, only comes after; it is the result of a work wrought by the mind upon experience, following the suggestions of experience itself. Without allowing ourselves to be cheated by the formulas which we invent in order to sum up this experience, we can only seek the real in that which is the most immediately present to us.

For, if it is indeed this reality, and not some phantom of truth in itself which

constitutes the object to which our ideas must relate themselves in order to be true, there is no doubt that our moral and religious beliefs cannot be true in the same degree as the affirmations of science. Science is a sure and powerful means of action upon the real; but psychic forces, moral and religious, permit us no less to measure ourselves with it and to make it ours. Science has given to the human race telegraphy, electricity, the diagnosis and cure of certain maladies. Religion gives to some men serenity, peace, moral power, the cure of evils, even physical ones recalcitrant to scientific treatment; or again, a faith, an ardour and an enthusiasm which transform the personality to its very depths and which confer upon it an extraordinary power over itself and over the spirit of other men.

Arrived at this point of his argument, William James took account of the philosophy of Henri Bergson; and he was struck by the fact that certain

parts of this philosophy could lend support to his own theory. He maintained that intellectual and conceptual knowledge, of which positive science is the most perfect example, is not original and equivalent to the real, but derived and relative. Yet how is this derivation brought about? An important question, for a proposed explanation becomes much more probable when it shows, not only that two terms are bound together but also how the transition may be made from one to the other.

But, while William James had left this problem in the dark, Bergson, starting from the principle that the immediate data of consciousness are essentially continuous, indistinct and mobile, and consequently incapable of being adequately represented by concepts the essence of which is discontinuity and fixity, explained exactly how, in order to satisfy our practical needs in a spatial world, the understanding, in applying to the purely qualitative data of consciousness those forms of quantity, homogeneity

and immutability which it bears within itself, forms a group of conveniently handled objects which are precisely those which science applies itself to grasping, defining and classifying.

Thus, starting from another point, and occupied with other problems, Henri Bergson upon a leading question arrived at views analogous to those of James, and, by the development which he gave them, very conveniently completed the theory of the American professor. What could be more significant than such a chance encounter! William James was gratified and took pride in it, and gladly called attention to it in the Hibbert lectures given in Manchester College, Oxford, in 1909.

The thought of James, however, follows its own course, which is not identified with the progress of Bergson's philosophy. To Bergson, if the understanding alters any subject given through immediate experience, it is because it makes for the practical. With James, if intellectual knowledge is inadequate, it

is because, being accommodated to the conditions of a practice of a purely material sort, it is ill-adapted to pure practice, which would be the direct action of soul upon soul. Besides, if intellectual knowledge is, to Bergson, derived and not original, it is because it contains certain elements which appear foreign to the immediate and purely intuitive data of consciousness; these in fact are reduced to durance in themselves, isolated, not only from space but from time itself. For James it is exactly the degree of complexity and of richness of experience which measures the degree of its authenticity. Experience absolutely immediate and intuitive would be total experience.

In this way the doctrine of William James concerning the relation of reality to experience is rounded out. Our experience differs from the real, its object, in so far as it is concerned with a partial and incomplete experience, beyond which we may aim at an experience at once deeper and broader. But in proportion

as we comprehend more things we are so much the better able to put each of them in its place, to consider it in all its relations, and thus to arrive at a just conclusion; which amounts to saying that we are still nearer the point of view of the real itself.

Religious experience, which is of all experience the deepest, the broadest and the richest, gives us a glimpse of this pre-eminent reality. Fully concrete, the truly real is a relation existing not only between concepts but between persons, not only between things mutually exterior and pushing their way about among each other like marbles, but between free beings, communicating interiorly among themselves by action.

Im Anfang war die Tat.[1]

But if it is true, that among all our modes of knowledge this total experience to which religious experience tends to approximate alone coincides with the truly real, it follows that the objectivity of which the other forms of experience

[1] In the beginning was the deed. Goethe, *Faust*, I.

have possessed themselves is, at bottom, only their relation to religious experience. In so far as the personal and relatively closed consciousness finds in a consciousness open to the action of other consciousnesses the explanation of its own nature, it may legitimately be considered as a reality. In so far as the sciences of matter receive from psychological experience certain principles which account for their own experience, in so far are they other than an abstract classification of images without originals.

The objectivity of the sciences and that of psychology depends, then, upon the objectivity of religious experience, far from the former being conceived as alone effective and true. And the real world, seen under its true aspect, if it is in conformity to the idea under which the sciences conceive it, is, above all, in its very foundation, whatever the moral and religious life of the soul proves and makes it. The soul is freedom itself, and this freedom is the root of existence and of experience. Experience lays hold

of what *is*, what happens. For nothing in the universe is ready-made. Everywhere and always the universe is in the making. The humblest consciousness which, through confidence and sympathy, joins other consciousnesses in the search for better things, collaborates with God, in this world of which he is a citizen, to create loftier destinies.

IV

METAPHYSICAL VIEWS

JAMES calls the doctrine in which his pragmatism results Radical Empiricism. He does not claim that this conclusion is its necessary outcome. Pragmatism is essentially a method, consisting in interpreting all concepts in terms of action; the philosophic doctrine to which the employment of this method shall lead is not predetermined. With our author the result obtained is the conception of an experience which, while remaining living and individual, becomes more and more comprehensive, and which in proportion as it is broader tends more and more to constitute, in itself alone, the being itself. Total immediate experience and truly objective reality are one; such is the principle.

It follows from this that the meta-

physical problems involved in the theories of the positive sciences do not necessarily transcend our power of comprehension. Experience itself, well directed, allows us to approach metaphysics.

It was, then, in perfect accord with his experimental researches that James, particularly after he had studied the conditions of knowledge, should have applied himself to the study of various problems which, in the general opinion, belong to this form of speculation.

* * *

In 1897, having been commissioned to give at Harvard the lecture upon human immortality instituted by Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll, Professor James treated the subject according to his largely empirical method and brought to it certain original ideas.

What, he queried, is the great objection which is opposed to the possibility of human immortality? It is that thought is a function of the brain. Nothing truer,

as William James the physiologist freely admits. But what does the word *function* here imply?

One of the ideas by means of which we define this word is that of production. When we say that light is a function of the electric circuit, or that it is a function of the waterfall to furnish power, we understand thereby that one of the two phenomena produces the other. In a case of this kind, there is no doubt that the disappearance of the cause entails that of the effect. But is this the only sense of the word function known to us?

The physical world itself offers any number of cases where the function of an agent is not productive but simply transmissive. Such is the function of a lens in relation to light. But what is to prevent our believing that the brain, instead of creating thought, is simply the channel through which it is transmitted from a spiritual world into our material world? Nothing, moreover, runs counter to the view that in the spiritual world itself our individuality has its true and

lasting foundation. But if this is the case, it is of slight importance if the brain be disintegrated; spiritual individuality would not be affected by that, but would exist in the world where it has its origin, not, it would appear, without preserving some modifications received during its earthly existence.

Physiology cannot prove these things; but no more can it contradict them. Its only legitimate conclusion in these matters is the *Ignorabimus* of Dubois-Reymond.

On the other hand, a great number of the facts of psychological experience, such as men have observed in all times, notably those which that profound psychologist Frederic W. H. Myers with all the scholar's care has explained in his articles in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, and in his celebrated book, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) — these facts tend to show that our psychic life is effectively susceptible of transcending the capacity of our brain,

and that in certain cases, at least, this organ is really only an organ of transmission and not an agent of production. Thus it is that certain cases of religious conversion, of providential direction in answer to prayer, of instantaneous cure, of premonition, of apparitions at the moment of death, of clairvoyant visions or impressions, of mediumistic power, unexplainable by the intrinsic properties of the brain, become intelligible, if the brain is an organ of communication between our world and another.

If, then, the immortality of the human individual cannot be considered as demonstrated, it must be acknowledged that for any man who relies only upon experience and who follows it wherever it leads, the principal objection that may be urged against it is no longer valid.

The celebrated work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), shows us James venturing, in a postscript or appendix, upon the evidence of his deepest and

most intimate personal experience, to crown his distinctively scientific beliefs with the super-beliefs of a religious and metaphysical character. Such are the belief in the reality of the good and powerful being whom the religious call God; the belief in a spiritual relation between this being and ourselves; even the belief in a direct action of this being, and of spiritual powers in general, upon the details, as well as the whole of the phenomena, of our universe.

* * *

The next to the last work published by William James, *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), treats of monistic idealism, of Hegel, of the empirical pantheism of Fechner, of the relation of the one and the many according to Bergson, of the continuity of experience, of God as a perfect being, of our beliefs as elements of reality; all subjects of a metaphysical character.

From one end of this work to the other a very strict sense of the fundamental

identity of experience and reality is evident, and, at the same time, the effort to persuade the individual to break through the barriers which separate his own consciousness from the consciousness of other beings.

Philosophy, we are told, is a thing of passionate vision rather than of logic; for logic can only find, after the event, reasons to explain the ideas of the vision.

James sets to work to convict of impotence and of nullity the Absolute of the Idealists, which is not felt and lived, but dialectically constructed by our understanding. How can this artificial concept, void of reality, influence our conduct and our condition?

On the other hand he accepts cordially, from the philosophy of the celebrated psycho-physicist, Theodor Fechner, the concrete doctrine of an Earth-Soul, as a pragmatic substitute for the abstract One of the Idealists. Reduced to their own power alone, as Fechner points out, our consciousnesses could not disclose

themselves to each other. One individual in his primitive condition is impervious to another. But through the action of higher powers, themselves fundamentally united with the divine consciousness, our individual consciousnesses may enter into relations one with another — may mutually inter-penetrate, love and understand each other. Fechner has clearly seen that it is essential from the moral point of view, but unintelligible from the physical, that a man should surmise what is within another man and interest himself therein. The respective relation of diverse individuals to a superior consciousness furnishes the solution of this troublesome problem.

Are we, however, in the earthly life itself, asks James, as completely strangers one to another as Fechner believes? Do we live in this world, do we die, necessarily alone? We are irremediably alone, it is true, if we consent to think only with our senses and our intellect. But as Henri Bergson has clearly seen, there is within us another way of touching

reality than through sensible and dialectic experience. An intuition exists through which two beings, instead of shutting themselves up in their respective individualities like epicurean atoms, may inter-penetrate without becoming identified with each other. "All is one," said Pascal, "one is the other, like the Trinity." The God in whom we can unite ourselves one to another, who has the power to cure the natural blindness of our soul with regard to the inwardness of other souls, — this God of love and of intelligence is not far from us, he is within us. The connection which the Idealist-intellectualists vainly hoped to impose upon things from outside by means of abstract and inert formulas, we find sketched, imitated in the things themselves, if behind their apparent relation of pure juxtaposition we know how, by a profounder, more direct experience, to grasp their relations of inter-conjunction, of mutual participation, finally of intimate fusion.

Now the continuous stream of con-

sciousness, attentively observed, offers us something quite different from fixed and respectively homogeneous elements juxtaposed one to another. It is when, separated more or less from feeling, and as it were relaxed, it retards its natural movement, as happens especially in scientific experience, that the thought sees before it the semblances of discretely multiple substances. In its true and normal life, where there is feeling as well as intelligence, the consciousness is animated by a rapid movement, and it perceives, not substances, but perpetual and changing transitions, an intimate combination of qualities, and not distinct entities. This arithmetical multiplicity is only found in inert things, imagined by a mind limited to thought alone; it is absent from the concrete mind, from which the real being, finally, is not to be distinguished.

The more we force ourselves to see things in a natural way, and not to use our eyes like a rude microscope or telescope, the more we see that beings are

one with their relations — relations which are fundamentally of a metaphysical nature, which unite without assimilating, and which allow individuality and plurality, indispensable conditions of our experience and of our existence, to exist conjointly with the tendency toward the harmony and living union which belong to the perfect existence.

The essential pluralism of things is thus more credible than their absolute reduction to unity. God himself may be conceived as a person who does not exclude the existence of other persons.

Need it be said, now, that these things *are*, purely and simply, that is to say that in their essence they are, once for all, eternally and immutably all that they may and should be? Would the supreme formula, the principle of necessity, that is to say universal identity which science dreams of, be the measure of the complete being?

Judging by concrete and real experience, such a doctrine is inadmissible. For, according to this experience, the

being is essentially living, self-producing, self-creating; it is not exposed to our notice for all eternity like an object ready-made in a shop. Even our beliefs and our efforts are factors in its history, which is its substance. We are the friends and the collaborators of God. It depends upon us in a certain measure to render habitable or uninhabitable the world in which we live. And in the same measure as we have brought about the triumph of the principles of sympathy, of understanding of the feelings and ideas of others, of justice rendered all intentions, of disinterestedness, of beauty, of heroism, and of devotion to ideal causes, this principle will survive.

V

PEDAGOGY

EVERY system of philosophy explicitly or implicitly ends in a doctrine of education. William James, for his part, considered empty and futile any assertion which did not signify a certain direction given to human conduct. But it seems that, for our philosopher, the question of education presents a particular importance. Education is distinctively the phenomenon in which the transformation is made from theory to practice. It is in modifying men that ideas may determine certain changes in the course of events. But if Americans in general desire above all things not to be slaves of the accepted, not to limit themselves to conformity, but to make use of it, William James in particular, for even stronger reasons, possesses

this same mental disposition, since his philosophy depends upon the eternal incompleteness of things, and upon the possibility that faith and human will may play a rôle in their history.

The problem of education is not, for James, a simple application of theoretic science. It is the natural and logical, but also original, consequence of the theory. In fact the general result to which his philosophy leads is the effective value assured to the notion of possibility. There is, according to him, both within and without man, an infinity of real possibilities. The problem thus presented to the thinker consists on the one hand in knowing how he must go to work in order to awaken, develop and render useful those possibilities in themselves latent; and on the other hand, in knowing what possibilities amid this infinite multitude it is expedient to select and in what sense it is expedient to direct their development. But, man being the creature in whom, for us, the transition from the possible to the real begins, the

problem is, before all things, the problem of human education.

The very reason which, with James, makes the pedagogical problem the natural conclusion of philosophic research, determines the exact relation of pedagogy to the theoretic judgments upon which it depends.

In the greater number of systems, whatever they may be, pedagogy tends to become reduced to a mechanical application of the principles proposed by the corresponding theoretical sciences. In vain we descant upon the difference between science and art. Failing a correct principle, art, in fact, sees itself bandied about between chance and the tyranny of rules. With James, art is fundamentally a different thing from science; it is more comprehensive. Every theoretical judgment, every concept, is an extract, a part, more or less imperfect, of some reality; the product of art is a reality. In the light of the formulas which indicate certain conditions for its realization, the living work contains some-

thing really new, irreducible, unknowable *a priori* by pure theory. And no longer does it reduce itself to a chance mixture of concepts, to an issue, an empty hypothesis imagined in order to confer a semblance of creative power upon the mechanism, and in this way render it capable of giving to certain things an air of originality. There exist real beings, effectively individual and active, who, in realizing their powers by means of actualities, overstep the bounds of science, without, for all that, abandoning themselves to the caprices of chance.

On the other hand, there is no conflict between the ideal order pursued by the active subject, and the real order where original action must come in. Natural laws are barriers which the subject could not overleap with impunity, but on this side of those barriers a place always remains open for free action.

Yet if pedagogy depends upon science, particularly upon psychology, it is neither a simple application of science, nor is it a practice given over in its distinctive

part to fantasy and caprice; it is in the true sense of the word an art, using science with intelligence and with freedom.

* * *

William James's pedagogy has the remarkable characteristic of not propounding in the beginning the problem of an end. Do we know *a priori* if our being has any destination, if any duty is imposed upon our will? For one who believes only in experience, the only legitimate point of departure is the reality which first strikes our attention. And this reality, in the order of the psychic life, is the dependence of the soul upon the bodily mechanism. While Plato and Aristotle give the first place to the rational part of the human spirit, the psychology of James gives this place to the active part, and accordingly makes biology the basis of psychology.

Human education, then, should be above all things mechanical. It con-

sists, in this sense, in developing in the individual certain habits, in employing therefor, according to the instructions of science, all appropriate means.

The habits, the acquisition of which is most necessary, are evidently those which relate to the conservation and the normal development of the organism and of the psychic functions.

But it is important to observe that man has the faculty of acquiring a mass of habits of which originally he did not possess a single rudiment. It is useful for him to acquire a great variety of habits. Every habit is a power, and the more powers a man has at his disposal, the more capable he is of various activities, the more fully he will live. We may then lay down this fundamental maxim: no acquisition without reaction; no impression without correlative expression. Everything taught to a pupil is to be for him the point of departure of a certain habit, is to determine in his organism a certain display of activity.

On the other hand, it is important

that these habits should be possibilities, powers at the service of man, not fatalities which tyrannize over him. The educator must take care, then, to maintain in the soul the suppleness, the power of adaptation, of change, of acquisition, of experiment which is its privilege. The very multiplicity and diversity of habits will contribute to render them more tractable.

In seeing James begin thus by setting up an automaton in order to induce in it, through the influence of the physical upon the psychic, certain mental determinations, Pascal's famous exhortation is recalled: "Act always as if you believe; take the holy water and have masses said; naturally that will make you believe and stupefy you."

But in spite of the resemblance, the difference is great. Pascal considers the case of a man whose reason leads him to believe and who nevertheless cannot do so. The obstacle, according to him, is in the passions which prevent the heart obeying the reason. He seeks, therefore,

the means of subduing these passions, and of restoring to itself the mind which had allowed itself to be led astray by their seduction. He utilizes, in this sense, the influence of acts upon feelings. The habit of material obedience reacting upon the desires of the heart will render it docile and at the same time draw away the mind, which it has deluded, from its stupid contentment with itself and its pretentious subtleties.

Contrary to Pascal, James in this first phase of education recognizes man only as automaton. He does not indicate the method of employing the automaton so as to make the heart execute the command of the reason; he only aims at giving to the human automaton all the plasticity, power and perfection of which it is capable, precisely in so far as it is automaton. There are within it certain potentialities, certain latent forces. The only question, so far, is to know how these potentialities may be awakened from their sleep and brought to the state of organic forces, immediately capable

of psychic effects. It is a question of the creation of psychic faculties, as numerous and as varied as possible. What moral tendencies ought to be sought for elsewhere? Has the human life any other purpose than its own preservation and the unbridled exercise of its powers? At this point these problems do not yet arise, and James presents them only if experience leads him to do so.

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The mechanical training of the organism and of the activity is, however, only the first stage of education.

In fact, a training which has in view the human spirit, neither is nor can be an entirely mechanical operation constituting in itself alone something final and complete. Who says consciousness says election, choice with the view of adaptation; and no sooner does a phenomenon take a psychological form than it contains something other than the mechanical resultant of its material conditions.

But from the very fact that consciousness selects as soon as it begins to exert itself, it tends to select in a more and more suitable way. For it makes use, in this case, of another instrument than experience and instinct pure and simple. This instrument is the idea. Thanks to the idea, or mental representation of a determined state of consciousness and of its habitual results, the ego can transfer by association, to some useful act which leaves it indifferent, the interest which at the time attaches itself to some other act, and thus procure for its power of selection a new ease and suppleness.

Now, encountering thus, beyond the mechanism, the idea in the human soul, an educator open to the suggestions of experience will make use of this different kind of instrument in order to increase the power and excellence of the human being.

The idea makes some very remarkable operations possible. It permits us, first: to preserve the traces of the past; second: to represent to ourselves some new phe-

nomenon which is so far only a possibility; third: to employ the resources bequeathed us by the past in order to realize this novelty.

The idea is thus the connecting link between the old and the new, between conservation and creation. By its means, man, freed from physiological fatality, makes use of the psychic mechanism, that first stage of conscious life, for the realization of a form of superior existence. What was an obstacle becomes a means.

It is thus that in considering the power, not only of the organism, but of the idea, that is to say in enlarging its field of observation, in going from the part to the whole, we see the whole react upon the part, and so are led to correct the conception of the human spirit as the exclusive consideration of the part had been able to suggest it. The rôle which the idea plays in our life teaches us that the physiological mechanism is in no way inflexible, that it shows, on the contrary, a certain suppleness, and that it may, in some measure, modify itself so as to

offer the requisite material conditions for a broader and higher life.

Thus, reasoned and intellectual education is added naturally to the physiological and mechanical. The former teaches man to dominate the physical mechanism. It should also teach him to maintain the freedom of his intelligence with regard to a new mechanism, truly intellectual, which, following the natural course of things, tends to become fixed and to oppose this freedom.

William James calls old-fogyism something like encrustation, the spontaneous malady of intelligence which it is important to prevent or to combat if we desire this faculty to fulfil effectively its function as intermediary between preservation and progress.

The concepts present in our intelligence at a given moment are so many moulds which permit it to receive and to understand the objects offered to it. But in order that we may in some measure realize the true nature of these new objects offered us, and in order that we may be

able to derive from what we see certain new ideas, it is necessary not only that we should choose concepts best suited to the given objects, but in addition, that we should subject the coneepts themselves to modifications demanded by certain objects for which they have not been constructed. The old fogy is a man who has lost control over his concepts; he no longer knows how to bend and adapt them; he applies them as they are to the objects which he wishes to consider; and consequently, he understands the new only in reducing it to the old, that is to say, in denying it. If, consequently, he forms a philosophic theory of his state of mind, he tends to admit as legitimate in the order of consciousness only science properly so called, that is, the reduction of the unknown to the known, of the possible to the given, of the future to the past; and he considers illusory the existence of art and of action which imply the creation of something irreducible to the given. Old-fogyism, says James, is the habit of mind which

we laugh at in old men; they understand only themselves, and speak only of themselves. But, upon closer inspection, we find that this state may appear at any age. There are young and tender fogies who are in no way behind hardened old men in their inability to understand anything which disarranges their ideas.

Intellectual education is essentially the preventive treatment for fogyism; it teaches us to enrich the mind with the greatest possible number of widely useful concepts, and at the same time to maintain intact and virgin, so far as possible, the faculty of adapting these concepts, the expression of the past, to the new objects which constitute the interest of the future.

* * *

Such is the second phase of education; to the possibility of determining in accordance with what is already realized, it adds the possibility of determining in accordance with purely ideal ends. This extension of possibilities is the fruit of

the idea, the nature of which is intermediary between what is and what may be.

Is this second the last phase? If it were we ought to content ourselves with searching for the new, for love of the new as such, without trying to make a choice between novelties. The idea, in itself, is indifferent to the issues entrusted to it; it casts in the mould of the given, and learns to realize alike the evil and the good, the erratic and the ingenious, the just and the unjust. But is action for action's sake the supreme end? Can we not, ought we not, seek to determine the objects toward which action should tend if it aspires to possess that perfection of which, in man's case, it is capable?

To this problem which intellectual education itself leads us to propose is related a notion which we find present in our consciousness in regard to every one of our actions: the notion of value. The directing of the will toward those things which have a true value is the third phase in human education; it is,

properly speaking, the education of action, or moral education.

The point of departure for this education is the effort to cure a sort of congenital malady of human nature: the blindness of every consciousness to that which goes on in the consciousness of others. This is a subject which William James had greatly at heart, and which he treated with contagious enthusiasm in his celebrated lecture to students: "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (*Talks to Teachers*, etc., p. 229). We judge others by ourselves; we do not understand them. We misjudge the motives for their actions, their way of looking at life, the ideal which they honour and dream of incorporating in their lives. We assume that they are wholly found in the phrases which they declaim, in order to speak as we do or to assert themselves before the world according to the fashionable barbarism, as if they themselves dared reveal, or could even see clearly, the secret movements of their own hearts.

Man is both better and worse than he asserts. It would be a much more interesting thing than we imagine to put ourselves sometimes in the place of others. We should realize, besides, that truth, that goodness, are things too great, too rich in various elements, to be encompassed by a single individual, and that thus a real value may be found in feelings and conceptions which differ from our own. The tolerance which we owe our fellow creatures is not a condescension, a reprieve indulgently accorded those who do not think as we do in order that they may correct themselves; it is a strict duty and a necessity. Tolerance is a wrong term; we ought to say sympathy; it is the opening of the eyes of consciousness; it is the recognition of the value which belongs to the personalities of others in the very ways in which they differ from our own; it is, in fine, the communion of consciousnesses in the common effort to realize an ideal which is beyond the power of a single individual, and which calls for as many

workers as possible. The monistic point of view is a strange one for little individuals like ourselves; the universe in which we live and in which we have the opportunity not only to develop and enrich ourselves, but to know, to act and to create, is a pluralistic universe.

What is it then, exactly, that we ought to seek out, love and aid in the consciousness of others? For it is not enough to wish something other than ourselves in order to wish as we ought. Is it possible to determine with any precision what really constitutes moral value, what gives human life its worth? To describe in an adequate fashion the proposed object of our activity is a contradictory enterprise, since such an operation supposes that the object in question contains only what is already seen, and in consequence would be an object, not of action, but of intellection pure and simple. But it should be possible to trace some sketch of it if our liberty is anything but caprice and chance.

For two things are certain. In order

that a human life may be appreciated by a consciousness which takes value for its criterion, this life must, in the first place, exhibit what is called virtue, that is, courage, self-denial, purity of intention, perseverance, good-will. In the second place, it must be consecrated to the pursuit of an ideal worthy of the name.

And a third condition must be added to these: that these two conditions themselves be intimately united. Neither one nor the other, taken separately, can make a great life; virtue without an ideal cannot aspire to the name of heroism; the merely ambitious man displays virtue, and some scoundrels are capable of self-denial; nor does the mere conception of an ideal suffice to ennoble man. What a disparity between thought and deed! And are not our thoughts within us rather than our very selves?

The thing which gives value to life is virtue, in so far as it is employed to serve a great cause; it is man giving

himself, devoting himself, to the realization of something really higher than himself.

And now shall we continue to inquire what, precisely, constitutes this higher form of existence which we call the ideal, and what are, in truth, the modes of activity which we call virtues? Certainly it is justifiable to continue to propose these questions, but it is not the province of a philosophy of experience and of action to seek to give a final answer, as a scientific rationalism would do. Life is, and remains, a problem, infinite as itself, and which it alone can progressively resolve.

CONCLUSION

WHILE he was preparing to make this voyage to Europe, his last hope, the voyage from which he was to return, alas! only to die, William James applied himself to the composition of a résumé of the whole of his philosophy for the use of students, a book universally desired, which he had meant to entitle, *Introductory Text Book for Students in Metaphysics*. I read in Professor Perry's excellent article (*The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, December, 1910) that throughout the cruel sufferings, the terrible emotions which marked this journey, Professor James, who had taken with him the papers relative to this book, worked at it incessantly, and returned home having made great progress. And I learn from Harvard that the work will appear in the Spring of 1911 under the

title, *Some Problems of Philosophy*.[1] He deals specifically with certain metaphysical problems: the Being, Percept and Concept, the One and the Many, the problem of novelty, faith and the right to believe. The style, in spite of the haste of its preparation, is more than ever frank, simple and beautiful. How grateful we ought to be to the master for this last benefit; for he alone could have written this universally desired résumé.

For our part, the slightest article of this genial writer appears so rich in facts and suggestions, so directly derived in all its parts from intercourse with things themselves, so charged with thoughts and curious expressions upon which we would like to meditate at leisure, that, constrained to make a choice, we ask ourselves at every step if the views which we leave alone are not even more interesting than those which we take up. The student who rudely called Professor

[1] Published, with title given above, and a sub-title, *A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy*, in April, 1911, by Longmans, Green and Co.

James to order because he forgot to supply him with material for his examination was right. James ignored, or rather he condemned, the art of transforming the mental activity, personal and incessant in his own nature, into industrial products bought ready-made and given up to others untouched save by the finger tips. He called "bald-headed and bald-hearted" those students without an inner life, without vigour and without enthusiasm, who neither think nor investigate, and who, in order to cut a figure at graduation, clothe their brains in rags of knowledge like a wig on an empty skull.

This is the first very remarkable trait of James's philosophy; it is anti-academic, anti-official, anti-scholastic; it is addressed to all, it speaks the language of all.

This external characteristic is itself the result of an important inner characteristic. William James does not take his point of departure in the concepts elaborated by former philosophers in

order to submit them to a new elaboration and to form some unpublished combination of them. Even more than in the books of philosophers he read in the book of nature and of science, and in the great book of the world and in himself. "Concrete, solid, thick," that is to say, full of living reality: these were the words he employed to designate conceptions worthy of interest. "Abstract," in his tongue, implied the idea of the factitious, the academic, the futile.

At this time, when philosophy seems to be going through a critical period, notably because of its more and more direct intercourse with the positive sciences, the shining example given by James, of a thought which, persuaded that it is not sufficient unto itself, plunges eagerly into reality, into science, into life, there to refresh and rejuvenate itself, is one, it would seem, to arouse universal attention.

It is clear, moreover, that William James, disrespectful critic of great systems, does not propose for his own part

to create a new system. I do not venture to say that he would have subscribed to Emerson's splendid words: "With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do." But it is certain that a logical contradiction scandalized him less than an idea under which it seemed to him impossible to place a fact. At bottom he did not in the least scorn logical unity, but he placed it before the mind as a goal, and not behind as a thing given. In his opinion we do not know *a priori* whether a logical unity exists in things, but we seek to see it and to put it there. Only the result can show in what measure the universe realizes or can realize it. On the other hand, it is very difficult to affirm that what appears contradictory from one point of view will remain so for one who can rise to a higher point of view. It seems contradictory to say that the mind acts upon matter, and matter upon the mind. This view, however, answers faithfully enough to our first experience, and it is advisable to admit it at least provisionally. But perhaps a

more profound experience is capable of weakening, of dissolving even this apparent contradiction.

The philosophy of James is essentially free. It goes boldly forward with experience as its only guide. The result of his investigation is very remarkable.

He starts from science as if it were in itself all knowledge, and the very development of science finally leads in his opinion to a type of speculation which at first appeared to be excluded by its own method, viz., metaphysics. Psychology effects the transition.

Hence an original conception of the relations of metaphysics and science. Metaphysics cannot exist without science; it lives by it. But science can neither abolish nor absorb metaphysics; the latter possesses in the presence of science its principle and its own reality, like the living creature in the presence of the substances by which it is nourished. Several individuality and collective solidarity — such is, on the one hand and

on the other and under various interpretations, the condition for science and for metaphysics.

The essential idea of James's metaphysics is the identification of reality with the broadest, completest, most profound and most direct experience; that is to say, with the most intimate life of consciousness.

Die Geisterwelt ist nicht verschlossen,
Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist tot.[1]

This Swedenborgian doctrine seems to inform the whole of James's work. The metaphysical problem is that of the relations, not of phenomenon to phenomenon, or of concept to concept, but of being to being. The blindness with which we are afflicted in this world in regard to the inner personality of other men is not incurable. There are, for those who know how to open the eyes of the mind, certain relations other than the external and mechanical relations of impenetrable atoms. There are truly

[1] The Spirit-World is not closed: your mind is closed, your heart is dead.

inward relations. Religious experience lays hold on this profound communion.

Metaphysics consists in taking an increasing cognizance of the world called super-natural, where individuality partakes of solidarity, and in connecting it more and more directly with this immediate and material world, where the feeling of our immediate needs is able to convince us that our destiny reveals itself in its entirety. And in considering things under this aspect, metaphysics contributes to make them so.

* * *

A philosophy very coherent, after all, and one which becomes clearer and clearer as it develops. Perhaps upon one point, however, the thought of James was still in process of definition.

If, apparently, he chose as his device the formula of Faust, *Im Anfang war die Tat*, "In the Beginning was the Deed," we may ask what, after all, in his eyes, is this action, the origin of things? What

are these spiritual relations between consciousnesses, the ultimate basis and inimitable model of the physical relations which our sensible consciousness perceives? Do not love and will alone enter there to the exclusion of the intellect? If this is true, should it not be said that they are themselves only deeds whose whole superiority over physical deeds is reduced to their being more inward and more primitive? Are these relations simply data, that is to say, in any final sense, fortuitous and irrational?

It would be necessary to consider them so, if the power of co-ordination which we call reason had no other mode of existence than this static understanding, the chief pretensions of which James has combated with so much vigour. Judging by his language on this point, we might believe at times that reason itself, in the totality of its manifestations and in its very essence, is reduced to have no other object than the Absolute, the One and Unchanging. Reason in that case would be exclusively abstract; and considered

as the norm of a thought which aims at grasping the concrete, it can only be a prolific source of error.

It is noteworthy, however, that, dissatisfied, as philosopher, with those relations to which science confines itself, in so far as these relations connect things only superficially, and consequently are themselves, so far, only brute facts, James has sought with increasing curiosity beneath these mechanical solidarities for solidarities assimilated, validated, corroborated and verified by the inner and conscious thought of human beings — in a word, then, for more truly intelligible ones. It would not, therefore, seem contrary to the underlying trend of his philosophy to admit, behind the static reason of the dialecticians, behind the ready-made list of immutable categories, a living and concrete reason, having to do, not with mere empty concepts, but with actual beings, and desirous not only of unity, of immutability and of necessity, but also and above all, of free harmony and inward communion.

An interpretation which finally brings

James' philosophy into the great classic tradition. For it was, indeed, a reason superior to the pure logical understanding, or διάνοια, this νοῦς of Plato and Aristotle, to which belonged, along with intelligibility, intelligence, causality and life. Certainly the Greek philosophy has for its main object the fixation of the changing, the assemblage of the multiple, by subjecting them to determinate and stable ends. In this philosophy, moreover, an initiative and an activity of spirit awaken which, while distinguishing themselves from the logical and empty One, are not in the least to be confounded with the fortuitous and automatic evolution of matter. And it is in developing these views, following the neo-platonist, Plotinus, that the moderns, under the influence of Christianity, disengage and exalt more and more the creative power which rules the very ends of the world and from which these ends derive their existence, their cohesion, their almost mathematical connection, their relative necessity and fixity.

Now if this creative power must be conceived as superior to logical reason which, like everything fixed, represents only one moment of the life of things, seen from the outside and artificially fixed, there is nothing to prevent its being itself reason, reason supple and alive, eminently analogous to the reason, at once theoretical and practical, spontaneous and controlled, that we find within ourselves. If reason, distinguished from action in a purely logical sense, according to the sole principles of identity and of contradiction, is no more than a table of inert categories; and if action, also reduced to pure concept, degenerates into blind change, fortuitous and material: reason and activity — conceived just as they are given us in our own experience, as penetrable one with another and susceptible of becoming one — essentially share each other's nature. As reason is related to activity, so activity is related to reason.

Therefore, to say, with William James, *Im Anfang war die Tat*, is not to signify,

"In the Beginning was the Deed," to the exclusion of the reason. Whilst admitting this formula, nothing prevents our maintaining the great principle of Descartes who also professed the free creation of the truth: "We should not conceive any preference or priority between the understanding of God and His will."

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